

African Grammy Winners Gala honours SA's Grammy 2023 winners

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Independent Media Group Africa (IMG Talent Agency Africa) and Arena Holdings bring the Grammys home at a gala dinner to honour this year's Grammy Award winners from Africa.



Zakes Bantwini, Nomcebo Zikode and Wouter Kellerman

The African Grammy Winners Gala, held on Friday, 24 February 2023, celebrated Zakes Bantwini, Nomcebo Zikode and Wouter Kellerman, who walked off with the Grammy for the Best Global Music Performance for their single, *Bayethe*. The award is presented annually to recording artists who have demonstrated excellence in the burgeoning field of global music.

Guests of honour at this gala included Harvey Jay Mason Jr, the CEO of The Recording Academy, and Panos A. Panay, president of The Recording Academy.

“We’re thrilled – and very proud – to have received this award,” says Zakes, “especially as it recognises music that has its roots in indigenous traditions. We believe this is the beginning of a new era in African music; one in which it will take up a prominent place on the international stage.”

In keeping with this, the event also saw the announcement of an ambitious new partnership between IMG Talent Agency Africa and Arena Holdings, with the two companies merging to form an entirely new entity called Aline, which is a Zulu word for: “let it rain”.

“By bringing together these two well-established and respected entities, we are forming a wholly African-owned company that will be able to compete globally in music, entertainment and film,” says Sibho Mhlungu, the CEO of IMG Talent Agency Africa. “Rooted in the philosophy of African excellence and the heritage of our continent’s extraordinary cultures, we will be producing content that can compete with anything produced at a global level.”

This content will be a unique fusion between indigenous and international influences, and will have the ability to traverse borders and appeal to all demographics, races and social classes. The partnership with Arena will also provide additional vertical integration to support IMG’s long-term vision.

“Our close relationship with the group chairman and senior management of Arena have afforded us the opportunity to understand their values and objectives, which are very much aligned with our own,” says Mhlungu. “This is a deal between people who like and respect one another – and that’s the best kind of foundation to build on.”

The Grammy winners and Aline are supported by Grid Worldwide, a specialist agency that builds brands by giving them meaning.

“This is an important time for brands globally,” says Grid Worldwide and 608 Experiences CEO, Adam Byars. “They need to demonstrate that they stand for something and, above all, have an authentic contribution to make to the growth and development of global music.”

He emphasises how the process of building brands relies on making people feel something about them and says this is why Grid Worldwide invests in the world of entertainment as a whole, extending beyond music to culture in general.

“Grid’s philosophy is, in fact, to ‘make it mean something’,” he said. “It’s all about purpose and about collaboration through all channels of entertainment. The success our Grammy winners have achieved is not only extraordinary in its own right, it demonstrates the value of collaborating across industries; about telling stories and about connecting with people.”

Sibo Mhlungu adds: “When working in entertainment and collaborating in these spaces, it’s important that we evoke feeling and emotion in people. It’s the ability to do this that makes African music so special. Without emotive moments it’s just beat, so we have to create those emotional moments that establish a connection with the listener.”

Running with this philosophy is the dream behind Aline.

“We want to compete in a global currency for global success,” he says.

The celebratory evening was hosted by radio personality Anele Mdoda, with electrifying performances by Sho Madjozi, Nasty C and Nomcebo Zikode.

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